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POEMS

ERWIN P. LANG

BOSTON
RICHARD G. BADGER, PUBLISHER
THE GORHAM PRESS

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES

THE CORHAM PRESS, BOSTON, U. S. A.

DEDICATION

Like to some star that through the firmament
Shoots shimmering earthward, there to dwell, a soul;
A blessed messenger from Heaven sent
To burst the iron of my heart's control;
Or like a ghost from hidden isles of dreams,
All vision-wrapt, in tremulous ecstacy,
So to my thought thy deathless spirit seems,
So in my love do I envision thee;
Not as an empress of these eyes' desire,
Nor as a ruler of this fragile mind,
But as a holy vestal clothed in fire,
Immaculate in the enamored wind.
Oh, thou who art the madness of my strain,
Accept this gift of tears, the offering of my pain.

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POEMS

STANZAS TO MUSIC "STILL SO GENTLY"

Still, ah, still so gently sleeping,
Still, ah, still so softly rest,
With thy warm hair's golden weeping
Falling o'er my arm and breast.
Now the morn's gray cloak enfolds us,
Tightly, for true lovers' sake;
Subtly peeping, day beholds us,
Thou in slumber, I awake.

Still, ah, still so sweetly throbbing,
All thy lucent beauty sighs;
Rising, falling, swelling, sobbing,
Thy white bosom on me lies.
Sleep, in dreamland's misty ocean,
Holds thee by its mastery;
And my heart, in its devotion,
Suffers at such rivalry.

Deity of darkened chambers,
Filmy god of drowsiness,
Who is there who still remembers
Every passing, swift caress,
Which thy long, enchanting fingers
Dropt in soft, ecstatic bliss;
Surely she who meanwhile lingers
In thine arms, remembers this.

Though she is thine own at even,
Though her maiden thoughts are thine,
While her soul dreams on in Heaven,
Here her body doth recline;
Though thy subtle powers have won her,
Mind and spirit unto thee,
Lie my languorous limbs upon her,
As her languorous limbs on me.

* * * * *

Day is peeping, softly creeping,
Falls its light, dear, on thine eyes;
Ah, no longer gently sleeping,
Waken with a glad surprise.
Now a new, fair morn unfoldeth
All its charms to thee and me,
And the star of day beholdeth
Thine awakened ecstacy.

Let thy beauty, me beguiling,
Look up through thy sleepy tears;
Still, ah, still so sweetly smiling,
Ah, how fair my love appears.
Now thy hidden soul uncover,
Rise, dear form, to morning skies;
Night's dominion now is over, —
Rise, and greet thy lover's eyes.

A WOMAN'S SONG

There was a lady who sang to the empty stars,
Of passion, of love, of the birth and the death
of desire,
Of the languor of peace and the sudden tumult of
wars,
Of the breath of the wind and the bitter blast
of the fire.

And she sang, "Oh, would that the moon and stars
were strung
On a ribbon here to my hand, that I might hold
That beauty of night which the lips of the poets
have sung,
And fondle its glory and peace as I fondle
my rope of gold."

And she sang, "Oh, would that the clouds might fall
from Heaven,
That I might be clad in their myriad-tinted hues;
I would dance from the dawn of light till the dead
of even,
Girt round with God's own pattern of pinks
and blues."

And "Oh, would that the heart of man were mine
to keep,
That I might sport with its pain the whole,
long day,
And at the night lie down at last to sleep,
With the broken toy forgotten and thrown
away."

And she sang, "The breath of the Spring is upon
my brow,
And the morning brings me the scents of
strength and strife;
But I cannot pluck the blossoms from yonder bough,
And have them keep the light of their youthful
life.

"And what is the joy that the world's delight may
bring,
And how is the scent of the fair-flushed roses
sweet,
When that which is good in the eyes of a sceptered
king,
Is dearer than life to the beggar there at my
feet?

"For I will have all that the labor of men can earn,
And I will have all that the pangs of birth bring forth,
Or I will have nothing, and naught shall ever return
To me, of the scattered sweets of the fruits of earth.

"The roses wither away and their blooms depart,
I sing, but the dreams in me are but empty clods;
I cannot waken again that pulse of the heart
That trembled once when I lived and talked with the Gods."

"A ROSE UPON THY BREAST"

A rose upon thy breast, —
Alas, so fatal fair,
Will throb with yearning unrepressed,
And blush to find it there.

A violet in thy tress,
Whose fragrance shames its own,
Will tremble at thy light caress,
And wither when alone.

The fire in thine eyes
Doth live but for awhile,
To glow and flutter at my sighs,
And flicker at my smile.

The perfumes of the South
Are fraught with subtlest charms,
But, ah; — the kisses of thy mouth,
The clinging of thine arms.

LAZARUS

Back from a soft, sweet sleep in curtained night,
Thou hast called me, back to grieving earth again,
To be a symbol of that living Light,
That one day dwelt in the abodes of men;
To be an echo through the waning years
(If to unheeding ears)
Of that supreme pronouncement: "Come thou forth;"
The promise to the weary heart of earth
Of its own soul's re-birth.
But I, revived by that life-giving Breath,
What profit have I of my living death?

So that the blood of the most holy Vine
Might give of life eternal to its shoots,
Lo, thou hast plucked me upward by the roots,
And cast me forth from ecstacies divine.
And though through all the ages still I stand,
The one pale mortal who alone has passed
Into the mazes of the utter vast,
And then returned at that august command, —
What recompense have I who saw, who heard,
Who tasted and who felt, — to whom was given

The knowledge of the glory of the Lord,
And speech with spirits shriven.
God, thou hast called me backward with a word,
And I no longer breathe the breaths of Heaven.

No mortal mind can register again
The ecstatic visions of that dear delight,
Nor mortal lips whisper to mortal ears
News of the heavenly spheres.
Now grasps at fragmentary dreams the brain,
These earth-dim eyes ache for the vanished sight
Of those they loved and lost in other years.
My spirit crouches in abysmal night,
Alone — and clothed in silence and in tears.

VENUS

The ages have sought for her bright wealth of the heapèd horde;
The nations have fought for her, hot-tongued with the flame and the sword;
And the nightingales sing to her their weal, their woe and their want,
And brute beasts bring to her their trophies and spoils of the hunt.

The wild man crawls to her cave and casts his spear at her feet,
And the soldier smiles on the grave; to die in her name is sweet;
And the king stakes his crown for her eyes and barters his soul for her lips —
The fire of the holy zealot dies at the touch of her finger-tips.

She shines in court and in camp, in the glitter of gold and lace,
And bright as the deathless lamp is the light of her faultless face,
And men die on the while that her hungry lips are fed; —
She is Venus, and she shall smile till the souls of men be dead.

VOICES CALLING

I

Out of the pallor of moonbeams and mists of the sea,
Life with its myriad voices is calling to me;
Love, like a murmuring harp, is naming my name:
"Come and be one with me, with my tumult, my flame;
Clasp me and clothe me about thee as hand to a glove;
Nay, be thou flesh of my spirit, — my lover, be Love.
Come, and abase thyself at my feet and adore;
Prostrate let me behold thee, and evermore
Weave o'er thy head in the dust my mantle of tears,
Wrapping it round with the bindings of fruitless years,
And sprinkling its mazes with odors of sweet incense,
That penetrates to the core of thine impotence.
Ah, how dear to my hearing thy surging sobs;
Fill me full with the measure of strong heart-throbs,
That tell the pound of a soul in an earthy clod,
Beating the bars of its prison, from whence ariseth a God."

II

Out of the far height of Heaven, the abode of the free,
Life with its myriad voices is calling to me.
Wisdom stretches his crystal, blank as the sky;
"Touch thou and taste the unknowing; — nay, be thou even as I.
Follow the bolt of the lightning, and pierce through the fane,
Where the All-Highest abides, and proclaims his sacred domain,
Proclaims in recurring pronouncements the vengeance that waits
The spirit who stops not nor stays for his ponderous gates;
The spirit, who, strong in himself, shall fear naught unknown,
And, clothed in the curtains of knowledge, fears but their parting alone,
That shall show him, naked and bare in aerial space,
Chill in the paths of the wind, ashamed in the Infinite's face.
Leave thou the fool to his toys," importunate Wisdom cries,
"Quit the broad highways of darkness and follow the intricate paths of the Wise."

III

Out of the clouds that cover the measure of tramping feet,
I hark to a bold crescendo that rises, mine ears to greet;
A deep and resonant murmur, that throbs in a hoarse-voiced hymn,
Like that which rose to the hosts of Heaven from the far-fallen Cherubim,
Where they lay in the nether worlds, biting their evil tongues,
And singing their burden of misery in a thousand fitful songs;
Now, lilting, lifting upward, with gradual gaining of strength,
With a sudden supreme concussion it bursts on my brain at length, —
And, with the fanfare of trumpets, naming my name from afar:
"Listen, O man, and attend me, for lo you, O man, I am War:
War, the sire of nations, out of whose loins have sprung
All that magic of striving the lips of your poets have sung.

Look on the glittering volume in blood and in tears
I have writ,
Read of the magical story, the joy and the wonder
of it;
The splendid pomp of the pageant under the noon-
day sun,
The stealth of the midnight march, and the glory of
conflicts won;
And all the lust of the plotting, where, gathered
close in the camp,
Man lays snares for man by the flicker of torch and
lamp,
Hugging close to his bosom the pride that to-morrow
shall grace
The victor's brow as he rides to the shouts of the
populace,
Which, thronged in glad expectation, with offerings
of flowers awaits
The hero who passes in triumph under the city
gates.
What, shall the sweat and the blood and the bitter
pain of the strife
Hold thy hand from the plucking of that which
alone is Life?
Man, art thou man, art thou one with the dauntless
spirits of yore,
Or art thou mystic or maiden, that shrink from the
toils of War?"

IV

I hear thee, O Life, thy many voices I hear,
Voices that surge and change with the changing year,
Can I heed them all and follow each crying guide,
Follow them whither they tend, nor listen for aught
beside,
Not that still, small whisper, that wraps the world
in its breath;
"Come to my bosom, O man, and feast thy heart; —
I am Death.
I am the end of the struggle, that ceaseless effort of
will,
That carries thee up the ascent, and goads thee,
laboring still,
Till the stony summit be reached, serene in its de-
solate height,
Where I await to clothe thee in robes of the infinite
night,
Where I abide to crown thee with branches of hem-
lock, entwined
With all that can quiet the passion, the tumult and
pain of thy mind.
Here shall thy memory perish, along with the an-
guish of thee,
Here shalt thou dwell forever, forever at rest with
me.

"Life hath voices in plenty that call from far and
near,
But I have only one whisper that nestles into thine
ear.
Life hath its paths and by-paths and thorns and
stones for thy feet,
But I have one way only, and the end thereof is
sweet.
A little pain, and a gasp that stifles the last, wan
spark,
Thou shalt close thine eyes for a space and awake
in a twilight-dark,
Where the things that have been are as those that
never shall be, —
Where Death exists, Death only, — and thou shalt
be one with me."

V

Buoyant voices of Life, subtlest whisper of Death,
Long ago I heard ye as now I hear ye again;
Heard ye with childlike candor first, with an infinite freedom of faith:
Shall not the gods, from their starry thrones, deliver me safe from pain?
Shall not their child forever walk along life's chosen path,
Passing on in favor and sheltered from storm and blast,
Plucking the fruits of life, secure from rod and wrath,
Daily approaching the gate that shall close on life at last?
But I fear the labor's close, and I cannot abide the toil
That daily rasps my spirit and causes my knees to sink, —
I have long ago grown weary of this world's empty spoil,
I have long ago desired at other streams to drink.
Could I but part the curtain that veils me in its night,
And glimpse, behind its shrouding, the glint of a hidden light;

Could I but scale the mountain and to that summit
press,
Where I might thence perceive the weaving of hands
that bless,
And, sinking beneath the awful serene of the blue
expanse,
Be not ashamed to prostrate fall under that mighty
Glance,
That from worlds unguessed and unconceived pierces
the glooms of space,
And falls at last on an outstretched form and a dead,
upturned face.

MEMORIES

Low adown and far around,
The long light sinks into the sea,
And by a silver circle bound,
That o'er her pale sad face is wound,
The moon looks silently.
And from her wan, unchanging eyes,
By wandering starlight kissed,
Cold tears of hope deferred arise,
That gently ripple from the skies,
And lie upon the world in mist.

Low adown and far around,
A murmur rises from the sea,
And, swelling mournfully, the sound
Of whispering sea-flowers comes to me.
Deep crimson and vermillion dyes,
And shades with shivery purple kissed,
And tender little violet eyes
Of deepest amethyst.

Low adown and far around,
Through long-leaved grass and fallow ground,
Come wandering odors of the sea,
And with them visions that abound
Of thee.

I hear again thy low replies,
I see the starlight in thine eyes —
With dewy jewels they are kissed.
Upon my heart thy memory lies,
Like tears of moonshine from the skies,
In sheen of shimmering mist.

DREAM AT TWILIGHT

A vision to me discloses
Griefs that I may not bear;
I have breathed the breath of the roses,
And kissed the feet of the fair.

All in the misty gloaming,
In the early, twilight hours,
My soul went forth a-roaming,
In search of the unseen Powers

That lurk in wood and in meadow,
And tread the forbidden ways,
And whisper and dance in shadow,
And laugh in the bright sun's rays.

My soul sought pathways hidden
Of leaf and blossom and bud,
Where the secret springs, unbidden,
Pour down their silver flood.

Where the unending river
Lingers awhile to ease
The burdens it bears forever
Down to the waiting seas.

And my soul sat down to ponder,
And dream of the fading day,
And the waters paused to wonder,
And the roses bent to pray.

In the charm of that still, sweet weather,
I and my soul were one;
And we sat at peace to-gether,
And looked at the dying sun.

In the mists of that golden dreaming,
As day began to fall,
Long, pallid hair shook streaming,
With sound of voices that call;

Long, pallid hands went reaching
For things I wot not of:
Was it for tricking or teaching,
Was it for hate or for love?

And my soul, at that mystic calling,
Stirred in its visions sweet,
And the shadows were falling, falling,
Low adown at her feet.

One of the air-king's daughters,
Born of that elfin place,
She sprang from the living waters —
Mine eyes dwelt long on her face.

And the rose shed its perfume o'er her,
But the bitter mists rose high,
And scattered their cloaks before her,
As the shadows fell from the sky.

The rose and the phantom to-gether
Have bound me, I know not how,
For there in the summer weather,
I worshipped her feet and her brow.

Long, pallid locks went streaming
As rain falls from a steep;
My soul shook off its dreaming,
And wakened out of sleep.

And my soul went forth a-winging,
To spaces deep and wide,
And her voice was singing, singing,
Sweetly, and close beside.

* * * *

A vision to me discloses
Griefs that I may not bear;
I have breathed the breath of the roses,
And kissed the feet of the fair.

THE WISH

I have had many a joy of life,
And many a prize have won;
And steered the course of a searching glass
Across the path of the sun;
And sought out the stars in their intimate haunts,
And measured the comet's flight,
But I would have done with their wonders all,
To sit at your feet to-night.

To sit at your feet and watch your eyes,
And let your caressing lips
Move on my brow with their murmurings,
Like the rustle of calm-bound ships:
And know that forever and evermore,
I am set from the world apart,
To lie at your delicate snow-white feet,
And hear your voice in my heart.

The deepest secrets of life and death,
That I have wrested from earth, —
I will set them aside for an age and an age,
For another to bring to birth.
And all I have wrought in travail and pain,
I will scatter to empty air,
Just to sit at your feet to-night,
And twine my hands in your hair.

And the day might come with its shoutings and strife,
Its clatter and blare of light;
But I would sit in your curtain of hair,
Still in the depths of night,
Never again to return to the sun,
But, blind to its blazing beams,
To lie at your delicate snow-white feet,
Caught in a mist of dreams.

ATTAINMENT

I saw two beings near a mountain wall,
Where on a day I tarried, looking up
Unto that vast and distant dizzy top
That swung above, too high for my desire.
They stood to-gether; one was strong and tall,
And on his brow there blazed "Ambition," writ in fire.

All in the gay young morn when life was high,
Girt round with iron, up the sharp ascent,
And round the jutty crags he laboring went;
And all the day I watched him, but as the sky
Darkened to night, I heard his fainting cry,
And the moon rising showed him still and spent.

Then in the shadow of the coming night,
The other rose; she had a woman's face,
But her fair form was like a girl's — so slight.
She rose, wrapped in the evening's embrace,
And on her bosom "Hope" shone like a light.

I saw her mount the crag, and as she sprang
From rocky cliff to cliff, a chanson rang,
Sweet, pure and clear, from lips that stainless were.

All through the hours her singing rose to God.
And in the morning I beheld her there
Upon the summit, in the clinging mist,
That slowly rose and showed her, Angel-kissed,
Hope on her height, at her attained abode.

DESIRE

I desire, I desire the dark and lonely pyre,
The chain and the dry faggot and the wan and ghostly fire,
And I yearn and I yearn for the ash within the urn,
For the freedom of the soul, and the fire that shall burn.

I crave and I crave the cold caverns of the grave,
The tomb and the vault, pale hands stretched forth to save;
And I wait and I wait, with my hand upon the gate,
I am coming, I am coming, O my love and O my fate.

RETROSPECTION

Souls of the heroes of forgotten ages,
I call ye forth out of your tombèd dwelling;
Princes and captains, soldiers, saints and sages,
To me — to me, I call, spirit-compelling.

Range now your hosts about our ranked distresses,
Pile thick your spears where ours are frail and rusted;
Out of our present barren wilderness,
We turn to you in whom our hearts have trusted.

Back to our sources, thought and wish are reaching,
Back to the past, whence is our sad beginning;
Too tired are we for striving or for teaching,
Our weariness the cause of all our sinning.

For us no longer reads the magic story
Of those high hearts who strove in the world's morning;
Indifferent alike to good and glory,
The god-head in our holy nature scorning.

Giving the heart's blood of our body slowly
For dross and gilded toys, like children playing
With little things that sap our vigor wholly —
Too long the mission of our lives delaying.

Nature herself hath no new charms to woo us,
The prayers upon our lips are faint and muted;
Faith in high Heaven no longer can renew us,
Its holy powers fled, its claims refuted.

Break ye the bands that hitherto have bound us,
Lead us away from love of goods and chattles,
And let the light of other days surround us,
With vision of the heroic surge of battles.

That we may take our unaccustomed places
Among the ranks of those who toiled before us,
And bend at last our glad, triumphant faces
On those high deeds that can alone restore us.

SONG OF SONGS

Behold, thou art fair, my love, behold, thou art fair;
Warm lilies shine on thy breast and burn in thine hair;
Thy step as a faun's, how light; thy fluttering grace
Allures me, and beckons the while I gird myself for the chase.
There is no covert to hide thee, no paths to elude
Me the pursuer, distraught, in heart-thundering mood.
Flee, and I follow the faster, O fair and fleet;
Hear, at thy back, at thy shoulder, — the pulse of the on-coming feet.

Behold,thou art wise, my love, behold, thou art wise,
And knowledge falls from thy lip and leaps from thine eyes:
I have sat at the feet of the gods, who have wisdom of old —
Shall I find it at last in the maze of thine hair's spun gold?
O goddess of light, without spot, and bright without stain,
Look to thy fleetness of limb — I gain — I gain.

Behold, thou art pure, my love, behold, thou art pure;
Thy spirit is calm like death, and thy peace as sure.
Have I fled so fast and so far to know that my prize
Delights not in weaving of limbs nor in shining of eyes;
But her lips are cold and her features pale, and her bosom, snow
That melts at the touch; she was mine but a moment ago,
And now is not; too frail for the clasp of the hand,
Dissolving before me as mists dispel from the land,
Fading from me in the star-lit dust up-hurled
Out of the ceaseless endeavor from whence ariseth a world.
Not mine, but all men's, to follow through fever and fast,
To clasp for a moment, yet faint with fear at the last;
Not mine, but all men's — and, pure as a violet's breath,
Behold, thou art death, my love, behold, thou art death.

BEFORE DEATH

Could I but find true utterance of my pain,
This life were surely then not lived in vain;
Could I but leave behind me when I pass,
A single breath breathed on life's troubled glass,
To show those souls that earthbound yet remain,
That once these eyes saw grief — that once I was.

How hard it is that I must leave my place;
How hard that I, the loser of life's race,
Must yield the prize to other's outstretched hand,
And, silent, bow me to the last command,
Empty of strength as ashes in a vase,
Sterile as are the hosts of seaside sand.

With cold lips locked, but tired heart overfond,
To seek the darkness of the vast beyond;
I look behind — no work of mine to tell
If I be worthy Paradise or Hell.
No bitter passion eased, no weary bond
Unloosed — no action, either ill or well.

I know that life was glorious and pure,
But ah; I know death is of all most sure.
I have felt virgin blood within my veins:
How brief the moon of youth, that quickly wanes,
The joy of life that lives not to endure,
The curdled milk and froth that long remains.

Ah God, I cry, that in a sudden hour
Thou couldst conceive the function of this flower
That wafts its fragrance o'er my numbing sense,
Fainting, amazed, at its sweet eloquence;
But I, I have no art for sweet or sour,
Sunk in my doom to hopeless indolence.

Shrinking the generous spirit of the bloom,
That yields its seed and gladly seeks the tomb;
Doubting the surging passion that inspires
The priest who bows before his altar-fires.
Oh, heart that hath no lamp to light the gloom;
Oh, soul that hath a dearth of all desires.

"I KNOW A MAIDEN FAIR"

I know a maiden fair,
With dewy eye;
She calls on me to scare
The shadows from her sky;
And when the storms wax fierce at night,
I clasp her hand till morning light —
So fair, so frail, so fond, so bright,
Her soul I share.

And when the southwind blows
Its luscious heat,
Over the dying snows,
I lead her feet.
And where the giant branches toss
Their hoar limbs forward and across,
O'er shadowy beds of maiden moss,
Her fancy goes.

Sweet; — that she dare not see
Aught of dismay
In that rude empery
That rules our day;
But when the tears of life flow deep,
She says, "I wake who fear to sleep,
For I must laugh who may not weep
For thee or me."

I know a maiden fair,
With dewy eye;
She calls on me to dare
What she would fly.
And though for her my heart must break,
And though I die for her sweet sake,
Hath she not called my life awake?
Her soul I share.

NESTING

My heart goes forth to thee,
Like a singing bird in the trees,
That launches his minstrelsy
On the passing breath of the breeze,
And, gathering wild unrest
From that new-born song he sings,
With eager and beating breast,
And wild, distended throat,
Spreading his azure wings,
He follows the flying note;
Follows it fast and far,
In the glow of the noon and the light,
In the blinded dusk of the night,
By the shimmer of moon and star;
Till, hidden of leaf and flower,
From the unshamed glow of the skies,
In a wondrous fateful hour,
A little nest he spies, —
And deep in the nest she lies,
And shrinks before his eyes.
Ah, Love that flutters and flees,
Ah, mate that is mine to be; —
Like a singing bird in the trees,
My heart goes forth to thee.

A VISION OF DEAD SPRING

In the perished days of long ago,
The Mayflowers blew in their bridal-white;
But their robes are not so stainless now,
And faded now is their Spring delight.
Low they hang on each drooping stem,
And on their brows the dewy gem
Gleams dull and pale, that shone so bright,
Once in the Maytime, long ago.

The same dear valley lieth low,
That bathed that day in the young sun's grace,
But now it is swathed in Winter's snow,
And locked in the Ice-King's close embrace.
The husky laughs of the huddled trees
Are gone with the scented breath of the breeze,
And thy heart's quick joy and the pure, fair face
Of that radiant May-day, long ago.

When nesting birds winged to and fro,
Thine eyes shone with a wan desire,
But thy looks are not so wistful now,
And cold to me is their one-time fire;
The flowered, sheltering, oft-sought tryst
Is changed, with the lips that then I kissed,
And all things weary, as thou didst tire
Of love — in the Maytime, long ago.

"BETWEEN MY LOVE AND LIFE"

Between my love and life,
Black Death hath reared his head, —
I feel no more her arms.
His keen and cruel knife
Hath cut the slender thread
That bound to me her charms.

The Paradise is high
That earthly wounds doth bind,
Where sundered lovers meet;
Yet could I reach that sky,
Perhaps I then might find
A Heaven at her feet.

And this a joy divine,
To feel that some sweet time
I might see perfect bliss.
That from this grief of mine
I thence might upward climb
Till I attain her kiss.

THE DREAM

I dreamed the Springtide had returned again
(Last night), with all its subtle mysteries
Of sighing zephyrs and of weeping rain
That their gray griefs do moan amid the trees.
And, dreaming, came my lady on my sight,
Sitting among the roses, in the place
Where I was wont to watch the eager light
Play on her hair and her impassive face.

Bending toward me, with a secret sign,
She beckoned me, and, as I gained her feet,
Prostrate, she rose in splendor from her seat —
And plucked a rose from the o'er-laden vine,
Plucked it and kissed it with all her red-
mouth's sweet; —
There stretched it me — her face in soft eclipse —
Maddened, I leaped to catch it to my lips,
Blushing for joy, from her fair fingertips.

Heavy with gentlest odors of the South,
I raised the flower, but e'er it reached my mouth,
Behold — a sudden blight.
The blossom fell to ashes at my breath.
I woke — the day was night;
My dream of its great fire had burnt itself to death.

SAPPHICS

Night is long. Ah, how lengthy is the darkness;
These mine eyes, that have feared the day's hot splendor,
Shrink not at all from the night's engulfing shadows,
Peaceful, though murky.

Slumber tarries amidst his dusky altars,
There where smoulder the fires of life, exhausted.
Come, dark god, rest thou the limbs of Sappho,
That yearn for quiet.

Thou low couch, from whose depths arise sweet perfumes,
Erstwhile breathing a deep intoxication,
Wherefore now art thou cold and unalluring,
Casting me from thee?

All the tears that my heavy heart is shedding,
Rise and swell to the lids, but flow no farther;
Passion's pain clings now to its burden of anguish,
Clasping it closer.

Some faint voice, like to whispered words of flowers,
Pale young flowers, whose graces the bees are seeking,
Sweetly luring, with treacherous sting all hidden,
Doth softly murmur.

"Whence, Sappho, comes this sleeepless passion upon thee,
And whence the source of this dull, eternal sorrow?
Poor mortal, why is this thy heart so burdened,
And yet so restive?"

Ah, thou voice that doth pierce mine inner hearing,
Breathing within me words of vaguest question,
I will answer the thing whereof thou askest,
And say in telling:

"My sad soul calls loud in mad insistence,
It is calling, calling to its beloved,
Calling, singing, singing its tender yearnings, —
No answer cometh.

"But I follow, follow where love compelleth,
Seaward there where the billows dream and whisper,
Whisper ever of loves that are forgotten,
In days long ended.

"Fall, thou sky, and in blackest folds enwrap me,
Hide me close from the peering eyes above me,
Those bright stars that would know my bosom's secrets, —
Blind thou their brightness.

"Now is the hour of mine own soul's rejoicing,
When my limbs, soft-kist by the breeze in passing,
Cling in rapture close to the earth that clasps them
In cool embraces.

"Now, my soul, are thy visions winged like swallows,
Soaring high o'er the passionless, pure waters,
Flying, flying far to the welcome Southland,
Where sunlight waits them.

"Fire and flame, and air that is hot and heavy,
Lit with light from the moon's own quenchless ardor,
These be dreams of a soul's quick adoration,
For passion's power.

"Live, my soul, though the day be drawing closer,
Soon will beams from the star of day be breaking,
Ah, — unkind — on the secret soul of Sappho,
Bared now to moonlight.

Yet, my soul, O thou weeping soul of Sappho,
Though day come and this night be all forgotten,
Cling thou close to the dreams the night hath brought thee, —
Dreams be thy portion."

"FAR IS THE DRIFTING CLOUD"

Far is the drifting cloud,
Where the live bird sings;
My heart doth cry aloud,
My soul doth spread its wings.

Forth to the rosy west,
My spirit flies far,
To where, on Heaven's breast,
Shines a lone star.

Ah, wilt thou heed my cry?
How fast the night falls:
Ah, do not pass me by,
When the heart calls.

Love, for my ecstacy,
Come thou with me where
Lilies wave joyously
Blown in the night air.

Where the pale lilies blow,
Let thou love's tears fall;
Seek not to hide — all know —
For I am all.

Where the pale lilies blow,
    There reigneth Heaven's bliss;
Seek not to say — I know
    This is thy kiss.

Cruel that bosom bright;
    Hot is my faint heart;
Ah, in the outer night,
    See, our paths part.

Pity, thou yearning moon,
    Thou moon of soft beams,
Dead is our love — too soon —
    Dead are our dreams.

Now sinks the moon low,
    Deep in the dark water,
Where the pale lilies blow,
    Weeping, I sought her.

Hast thou no word for me,
    When the heart calls?
Nay, on my misery, —
    Night falls.

LOVE GUERDONS

What gifts shall I lay at the feet of my love,
When I come from the seas and the lands of the deep?
Shall I bring her Olympus, the footstool of Jove,
Shall I bring her the sandals of Venus to keep, —
For her fair, sweet feet?

These gifts shall I lay at the feet of my love,
When I come from the lands of the deep and the seas;
The breath of a kiss from a Grecian grove,
Left there by amorous deities,
And huntresses fleet —
For her fair, sweet feet.

What gift shall I bear for the hand of my love,
When I come from the seas and the lands of the deep?
The Pearl of the East or the silken glove
Of a lady Sultana, lying asleep,
For her small, white hand?

Ah, this is the gift for the hand of my love,
That I bring from the lands of the deep and the seas;
A gem that was formed in the Heaven above,
And set high in God's golden galaxies; —
The Polar star,
For her small white hand.

What boon shall I bring to the heart of my love,
That I bring from the lands of the deep and the seas;
A gem that was formed in the Heaven above,
And set high in God's golden galaxies; —
The Polar star,
For her small white hand.

This boon shall I bring to the heart of my love,
When I come from the lands of the deep and the seas;
I will bring her peace and the wings of the Dove
That the Psalmist sings in his psalteries,
From Syria's shore,
For her holy heart.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

I heard one say: The Twilight of the Gods
Is come and Odin, Jupiter and Zeus
Have passed. Jove's mighty thunderbolt is stilled,
The rumbling of his wrath is heard no more.
Even the worship of the fair white Christ
Languishes like a lily on the stem
Of Mother Church, who droops with weariness
At the defections of her sons. For men,
Hot with the fervid labors of the years,
And flushed with what success their toils have wrung,
Look now to each and other and they say:

Ours are the hands which out of tree and stone
Hewed homes for maid and babe, and strewed the cave
With softest skins of outraged brother-beasts.
Our was the burning courage that inspired
Prometheus in his fateful theft from Heaven.
We bore the travail of the mid-day toil; —
But for our struggles in the utter dark,
Still the primeval forest were our home.
We forced the soil, and with our will enslaved
The brute creation, taming their wild hearts,

And bade them bear our burdens. Our bold brain
Ravished in course of time from Mother Earth
The secrets most she cherished. Now at last,
After colossal labors that have bent
Our foreheads to the dust so that we scarce
Walk longer upright, as becometh man,
We fashion to ourselves out of our thirst,
For all to us most unattainable,
Images called "Our Gods."

Made in their image? Nay the doubt must come,
Made in *our* image; our creation they,
Since never man hath looked upon their form.
They in their large aloofness dwelt apart,
Secure in what we call infinity,
And, dreaming of the doom of larger worlds,
Stooped not to us, when, in our jungle -home,
We fled in bestial terror from the foes,
So mightily endowed, that hemmed us in.
Yet in our helplessness and our despair,
When that it seemed that to extinction
We must be doomed, courage and will prayed on:
"Somewhere," we cried, "the living Gods have seen
Our torments; through the music of the spheres,
Our cries have reached them. They will give us
aid."

And we laid low the forests, made us weapons
Of the dear, drooping trees, and fought our way
To safety and existence. Now we reign.

Shall we bring praises to the Gods who shared
Never with us, our soul's extremity?
Now that our labors have achieved for us
Some measure of tranquillity at last,
Are we to bow the knee and kiss the hem
Of garments, never yielded to our lips
In the hot days of our most bitter youth?

The Twilight of the Gods is here indeed.
If they our hard-won souls would now possess,
Let them unfold to us their age-old plan,
Inscrutable, that we in vain have sought
To learn from the beginning. Let them now
Turn back the pages of the unknown past,
And read to us the riddle of our life:
And, having told the wherefore of the tale,
Open the final chapters and relate
To us the therefore that explaineth all.

Tired is man, weary of his success,
Blind with the study of life's mystery,
Bowed with the burden of a million years
Of unremitting toil. Oh, might he now

See the uncovered faces of his Gods
Smiling upon him; but the doubt persists,
Are they his own creation, do they live
But in the intensity of his desire?
Baffled, he bows his head and in his heart
Muses upon the twilight of the Gods.

* * * *

So spake the pride of man, but on the heights,
Lockt in the fastness of their holy hills,
Stirring their great limbs, laughing in their dreams,
The Eternal Gods sleep and abide their time.

Let this our comfort and assurance be,
In midst of outworn creeds and weary prayers;
If God be man's creation, what vast hands
Wrought in man's soul the God-Conception
Flashing through days of joy and nights of pain,
Sometimes unbidden, often sought in tears,
And bitter supplication, yet indeed
Ever at hand in last extremity?
We who have wept till dawn have known this thing,
A secret presence, laying on our lips
Fingers that lull to quiet, and have slept,
Serene in the conviction that our lives
Dream calmly now like ships riding at ease,
In unfrequented harbors with sails furled.
We who have laughed to feel midsummer sun

Hot on our limbs and the wild songs of birds
Strong in our ears, and, children-like, have raced
Across the fields in utter lust of life,
Have known beside us, keeping pace with us,
A jocund spirit, laughing and gay as we.
And who in youth became aware of love
(First love) steal on us like a sudden blush
Of wondering shame, and knew now what it was,
But knew that henceforth all our life is changed,
We saw in the white maiden of our dreams
The God-conception flame, serene, sublime,
Written upon her brow and in her eyes.

Can we who sense a presence, like a touch
Now at our hand, muse on the twilight gloom
Of perished Gods? Hush, can we hear Him speak?

NIGHT VIGIL

Nightwind that through the garden slips,
And at her bedside lingers,
Kiss, caress my darling's lips,
With tender, scented fingers.

Let not her dreams be of alarms,
Let all good things betide her:
Gather her in your lulling arms,
That I may seem beside her.

Wind, oh nightwind, low and sweet,
Wind of a thousand fancies,
Tenderly touch her little feet,
Tired of play and dances.

Croon, Oh winds, through her golden hair,
Your songs shall be of Maytime;
But softly sing through the tresses fair; —
She must not wake till daytime.

Silent stars of a summer sky,
Seek out that chamber shady,
Drop your beams on her closèd eye,
But do not wake my lady.

Nightbirds that flutter round my head,
    Your fitful feathers gleaming,
Beside the window at her bed,
    The passion flowers are dreaming.

Gather their petals on your wings,
    And sprinkle them over her bosom.
Therefrom a tender seedling springs —
    It grows and bears a blossom.

RHAPSODY

Bright, bright as the Lord of Light,
Are the songs that the angels may raise
In peans of worship and praise
To their Maker, their God and their King;
Are the songs that the seraphs of Heaven may sing,

To the Ancient of Days.
But fair, fair as the whispering air,
That chimes through the branches and boughs of the trees,
Are the songs of thy heart, are the harmonies,
That thou hast sung, for his tender sake,
Who hath called thy love awake.

Thine, thine are the graces that shine
In the large, mild stars of the skies of the South,
Where the tender moon looks down from on high,
With his heart on the earth, and his soul in the sky,
And a sweet, sad smile at his mouth.
Thine are the pleasures that lurk in Ocean,
Where mermen and mermaidens rest at ease,
And anon uprise with a languorous motion,
Nodding and smiling, with eyes that tease
The finny monsters from their domain
Of salt-rock cranny and seaweed grove;
To follow them round the world for love,
And back again for pain.

Sweet, sweet are the thoughts that greet
    Thy heart's desire, thy soul's unrest,
And, peering into thy mystic's face,
And gazing into thine eyes a space,
    I can guess the thought of thy breast.
Shall I tell thee, yes, shall I tell thee, dear,
    Shall I whisper it, shall I speak it low?
    Bend over a little — bend over — so, —
My lips are now at thine ear.
Is it Love or Wonder, or Knowledge? Nay,
It is none of these; some far, fair day,
In another life, in another way,
    By grace, I shall let thee know;
For thy holy dreams are not for earth
    Nor ever here to be told at all, —
    Beyond where eternal shadows fall,
        They shall be brought to birth.

THE PORTRAIT

Next to my heart her portrait lies,
And on my heart she rests her head,
Her tresses all about her shed;
There, lulled by my unbidden sighs,
She dreams as on her marriage-bed.

Her lips against my panting breast,
Her deep eyes peering in my heart —
I have no life from her apart;
All things in her have birth and rest;
From her all tenderest motives start.

Oh, brilliant are the far Sun's beams,
Ere yet in passionate pain he dies;
But far more brilliant are her eyes,
Filled, fevered with ecstatic dreams,
Blue splendors of the northern skies.

Her pallid bosom's glory falls
In quick delight upon my sense,
No tongue can sing the eloquence
Of those high, gently-swaying walls,
Twin prisons of her innocence.

Ever through life's alarms she saith,
"Fear not the valor of the foe,
Though the high Gods have willed it so,
Art thou not still my life, my breath?
Though all things strive against thee, know
My face between thy heart and death."

DREAM-CHILD

A little child shall lead us; — and we know,
Where strong men fail and angels fear to tread,
There, innocence and childhood stand, and lo,
They are unarmed and they are unafraid.
Master of Life, give unto our faint hearts
That mighty trust from whence true power starts.

A little child shall lead us. Come thou then,
Thou child of mine inexorable thought,
Whom love and yearning brought
To be the benediction to my pain.
Lay thou thy hand across my burning eyes
With the soft touch
That I have yearned for long and wanted much.
Yield thou some surcease to the fears that bind
The freedom of my mind,
Now cold and bleak as these December skies.
Out of the thickening snows and driving wind,
Borne on the flapping pinions of the storm,
Thy voice comes faint and fainter and I find
Less clear, the guiding signal of thy arm.
My eyes are to thy form and features blind,
And with dull apprehension I await
The hour when thou vanishest behind
The close drawn curtains of my evil fate.

Yet fade not, oh thou vision of my delight,
Long time have I awaited thee, alas;
And gazed into the future of my night
As one who looketh darkly in a glass
To watch all vain things pass.
And ere thou fleetest, bend thy gaze on me,
That I may feel a trace
Of the uplifted, solemn ecstacy
That Raphael felt, when gazing on the face
Of his Madonna, in whose eyes he saw
His inmost soul revealed in purity,
And all the black made white; — in holiest awe,
Like him, I stand before thee and I see
All my sad soul in that fair face complete,
But all its sad made sweet;
Yea, and the utter wastage of the years,
And all the bitter knowledge which to gain
I have bought dear with pain,
Alike are banished; thy young grace appears
Fresh as an April morning, and my tears
Fall at thy feet likest to April rain.

With power of thought have I begotten thee;
The urgings of my will have brought thee forth,
And all the faith and favor of my trust
In thy reality
Gird thee with jewels of surpassing worth,
And chiefest of these, immortality.

Dust unto bitter dust,
With but an empty memory to be
With those we leave behind us on the earth,
Such is the record of our mortal dead.
But always o'er thy head
The star of an eternal life shall shine;
Forever in my brain
The words we spoke beat out their glad refrain,
And evermore thy spirit dwells with mine,
Thou dream-child, born of weariness and pain.

BALLAD OF THE LOST LOVER

The ship of my love is upon the sea,
Dancing over the eastern waves,
And the parting water flows full free,
Before the prow, which its white foam laves.
Peace moves on the bosom of the deep,
And flying fishes sport and leap.
He stands, and with a shading hand,
Looks ever to the awaiting land,
That lies before him distantly,
Long leagues over the eastern waves.

His dreams are not of the burning sun,
Or the glitter of stars on eastern waves,
But are ever of the beloved one,
For whom his tired spirit craves.
He sees the calm of the countryside,
And the parting smile of the youthful bride.
His tear-wet eyes grow wan and dim,
But she stretches out yearning arms to him,
When the weary voyage at last is done,
And toil is past — with the wind and waves.

But oh; the ship of my love was lost,
When the storms swept over the eastern waves,
And his fair strong form was dashed on the coast,
Where it lies at rest in the cold sea-caves.
The dank weeds tangle in his hair,
And mermaidens gaze in ghostly stare;
They kiss his pale lips and anon they weep
For him, who lies in a restless sleep,
While his fair limbs languish, billow-tost,
Beside the murmuring eastern waves.

Now that the ship of my love is lost,
Beyond the desolate eastern waves,
I will arise and go down to the coast,
And seek the abode of the kind sea-caves.
I will turn to the mermaidens streaming eyes,
I will ask where the love of my spirit lies;
They will show me his couch where he doth bide, —
I will kiss him once, and lie down by his side,
A restless bed on a restless coast, —
Beside the murmuring eastern waves.

DISILLUSION

Thine eyes from the window shining,
Like stars from a purple Heaven —
And I am at peace who have striven;
Dead is my vague repining.
Thy glistening head inclining,
Its tresses the soft wind blows
In masses of shimmering gold, enshrining
The face of my fair white rose.

Slipping its ribboned tether,
From thy breast hath a bird arisen,
Leaving its lovely prison,
With flutter of wingèd feather.
Beloved, I wonder whether
Thy marble bosom's chill
Hath sent him forth in the April weather,
Either for good or ill.

An influence softly creepeth,
Creepeth over my bosom,
Like the passing soul of a blossom,
Or the breath of an elf that sleepeth,
And the flame of my faint heart leapeth
In quivering fear, to know
Thy spirit's winter heapeth
Thy false heart high with its snow.

AUBADE

The morning's hues are blithely breaking
In tender, roseate light;
Arousing, quickening and awaking
The slumbers of the night.
Oh, morn that art all loving,
Still bide with us alway.
Why art thou so soon roving
Beyond the hills of day.

Oh, yet with us remain,
Forever would I plead
Thy longed-for gift to gain,
For thou art dear indeed.

The lips of youth are shyly breaking
In smiles of heart's delight;
Arousing, quickening and awaking
Old hearts that sleep in night.
Youth, that art so deceiving,
Still bide with us alway;
Why art thou so soon leaving
For other paths to-day?

Oh, yet with us remain,
Forever would I plead,
This god-like gift to gain, —
For thou art dear indeed.

SERENADE

The hart hath left the cooling springs,
And sought his rest.
The bird its homeward journey wings
Unto the nest.
All creatures of the earth and sky
Sink now to sleep,
And all is silent, save where I
Love's vigil keep.
Oh, goddess of the moon's bright beams,
While softest slumber locks thine eyes,
Remember him amid thy dreams,
Who wakes and loves and sighs.

Love is a creature of the night,
Whose reign begins
When all things else are lost to sight,
And dead to sins.
Then, shedding tears of vast desire,
(With moony gleams)
Love drops its pearly dews of fire
In maidens' dreams.
Oh, goddess of the starlit sweeps,
Might I but bare that bosom fair,
And seek within its rosy deeps
If I have portion there.

THE TWO BRIDAL FEASTS

"Oh, Mary, Mother Mary; One night to-night, between Hell and Heaven." D. G. ROSSETTI.

Through the dim gardens of the night I walked with
melancholy pace,
Slowly, and with averted face, shunning the path-
ways of delight;
Sorrow upon my soul had lain its deep enchantment; in me dwelt
The bitter pains that then I felt and feared, alas, to
feel again.

Slow and with melancholy pace, I walked the gar-
dens of the night,
Where, clothed in robes of misty light, I met a
Spirit, face to face;
His arms were crossed upon his breast, his many-
hued, bright wings were furled,
As in the morning of the world, when peace above
the waters pressed.

He held mine eyes with fixèd stare, and ere I turned
away my sight,
Through the dark realms of deepest night he drew
me downward by the hair;

Past many a twilight star we fell, where darkness
brightens into day,
And fast along the Milky Way, where myriad twinkling star-flowers dwell.

Beyond all thought and past all time, we sank, where, in the nether Spheres,
In the deep mire of dead years, coils the dread Serpent in his slime,
Whose eyes are blinded in his head, brooding on the decaying past,
He breaketh not his fearful fast, until the day when all the dead

From their deep-hidden graves are sought in the ten thousand worlds that gleam,
As from the shadow of a dream, upon the calm Creator's thought.
Then shall the heapèd carrion of the discarded dead be cast
Into his waiting jaws at last, for his cold heart to feed upon.

Thick, poisoned vapors rose and fell about him like a pestilence.
Beside him lay the gateway whence men gaze upon the pains of Hell.

Mine eyes were sick to look within, and yet was I
compelled to see,
Where, midst a goodly company, sate high, sate
high, the Prince of Sin.

Clothèd as in a crimson flame, his red robes fell on
either side;
A drooping mantle sought to hide the letters of his
secret name;
The dark rebellion of his glance flashed the fierce
lightnings of the proud, —
Above the tumult of the crowd, I heard the music
of the dance.

And on his knees a woman lay, of gentlest aspect,
loveliest shape,
Her lips were sweeter than the grape, and she was
fairer than the day;
Ah, well might man, with thirst obsessed, his price-
less spirit seek to sell,
To drink the maddest joys of Hell from the white
fountains of her breast.

He sported with her wreathèd curls and kissed her
drooping eyelids wide,
And praised, in union with his bride, the bosoms of
his dancing girls.

The fatal fragrance of the feast was in my nostrils; in mine ears,
The music of the nether spheres; — I saw the markings of the Beast.

Then round the Banquet-board I cast my fevered eyes, where there they quaffed
The contents of some magic draught — those lively souls of that repast;
And as their master from his seat called forth his ribald ironies,
They fell before him on their knees and worshipped there before his feet.

Then spake the Spirit at my side: "Lo here, — the Bridal of the Beast,
Where each soul beareth to the feast some goodly guerdon for the Bride.
And he who seeks oblivion and yearneth for the fullest measure
Of body's lust and passion's pleasure and all the joys of woman won.

"Shall hither find his heart's delight; come now, and in thine arms uplift
Thine own especial marriage-gift, and lay it down before our sight;

The price to thee is little worth, the recompense is her caress;
She only asks forgetfulness of all the happenings of earth.

"For all thou gainest price is paid; no more for thee shall flame the fire
Of an unsatisfied desire; think well before thy choice is made.
And figures that the darkness brings to torture thee in waking dream,
Shall vanish evermore and seem the corpse of all forgotten things.

"And she for whom thy spirit cried its empty loneliness and pain,
Shall never smile on thee again that tender smile with which she died;
No more for thee the bitter haze that clings about her precious things, —
The jewels, and the finger rings, that were her own in happier days."

Forgetfulness — I pondered deep; rest evermore from torturing grief,
To know again the glad relief of freshly waking out of sleep,

With new high hopes to greet the sun, and laugh
with utter joy of life,
To feel no more the cruel knife stab at my heart —
oblivion.

Yet, not to breathe her name again in evening prayer
or morning song,
Never again to hear her tongue beat echoes in my
listening brain,
To feel her hand in mine no more, never to know
that some far day,
She waits to kiss my tears away on some remote,
serener shore.

Then to the Spirit, standing by: — "Behold, ye know
not what ye seek;
She was the refuge of the weak and wavering spirit
that is I;
Not mine the courage that can yield so rich a gift,
or pay so dear,
Nor could I live without her here, who was my ban-
ner and my shield.

"Without the memory of her loss to cleanse my
thoughts to all beside,
Let me be ever crucified upon mine own especial
cross,

And these allurements left behind, let me return
again to earth,
To find perhaps, my soul's re-birth in the dark sha-
dows of my mind."

There followed then a blinding light — the Spirit
caught me unaware,
And drew me upward by the hair, far through the
realms of cloudless night,
To that white sphere, where souls forgiven walk in
their robes of innocence,
We came unto the gateway whence men peer from
out the bliss of Heaven.

Where eyes, blinded by ecstacy, look forth from the
enchanted bowers,
Nor count the passing of the hours that lead into
eternity;
Ever in that abundant light, their groping spirits
satisfied,
They group about the Blessed Bride and bow, ador-
ing, in her sight.

Then to a smaller, narrower door, barred with huge
columns of cold steel,
We pressed, and my hands stretched to feel its iron,
unyielding; there before

The threshold, sad souls, bent with sin, gaze through
on the forbidden land,
And strive in vain to understand the mystery that lies
within.

And with wan sight, I, even as these, gazed in
through the ungrateful bars,
Where, on a throne of Seven Stars, sate high, sate
high, the Prince of Peace.

He was all clothed in white raiment, and on his
robe on either side
Was writ: — "The Spirit and the Bride, say,
'Come'," and vivid flushes sent
Their rosy beams from place to place, from the love-
light upon his breast,
Full on the faces of the Blest, upturnèd to their
Master's face.

The red wound gapèd in his side, and on his brow
the crown was worn,
Of twisted, agonizing thorn, the symbol of the
Crucified;
I looked upon the smile that shone sweet on the holy
lips — I saw
The flaming letters of the Law, set high above the
starry throne.

I saw the white-robed saints that sate with adoration
on their tongue,
I heard the voice of them that sung forever by the
closèd Gate, —
Lo, at his feet a little child played with a starry
cross, and there,
Crowned by her mist of golden hair, the Eternal
Mother sate and smiled.

As one who drinks some opiate, and sinks before its
blissful calm,
My hands extended either palm, prostrate I fell be-
fore the gate;
My pain that craved the long surcease cried out the
bitter cry of sin,
"Oh, Lord of Ages, let me in that I may find eternal
peace."

Then spake the Spirit at my side: "Lo, this is the
White Bridal Feast,
And here assemble first and least, to keep the Mar-
riage of the Bride;
See, in each single hand doth shine the sacred gem;
— each arm doth lift
On high the precious marriage-gift of broken bread
and lethal wine.

"They gather now about the Host, with pale lamps
trimmed, the Virgins stand,
Close at the Bridegroom's either hand. Why tarriest thou, unhappy ghost?
Empty thou waitest where have stood, before thee, the uncounted dead,
Bearing no fragments of the Bread, no golden chalice of the Blood.

"Three Orient kings, of old they bore, the gifts of frankincense and myrrh;
Offer thou now a holier, — and lay it down his feet before.
For that His Love for thee devised a higher life, a loftier part,
A broken and a bleeding heart the Bridegroom never hath despised."

Then, with my hands thrust through the gate, struggling against the bitter bars,
My voice addressed the Throne of Stars on which the Prince of Glory sate:

"Locked in the dusk beyond the day, barred from all shelter from the storms,
Far from the everlasting arms, a soul, despairing, seeks his way;

Poor in his poverty he lies, ashamed and naked in his guilt,
Upon his head the blood is spilt of the eternal Sacrifice.
"Weak, and in wisdom incomplete, helpless in weight of misery,
I only look, Oh Lord, to thee, I only kneel before thy feet;
Oh, Lord, my God, Oh, God, my king, have pity on the soul that stands
Before thy throne with empty hands, that bear no seemly offering.

"Yet here, twin gifts, by bitter strife purchased, and won through costly pain,
A broken heart and shatter'd brain, — to bear the witness of my life,
Sole records of decaying years, the sum of mine achievement, cast
Before thy holy feet, at last, bathed with the waters of my tears.

"And if the gifts which I have borne seem fitting in thine august sight,
Before I fall to outer night, grant me upon thy marriage-morn

To see on me her image glow, — her whom my
heart hath cherished most —
The best-beloved, whom once I lost, alas, how many
years ago.

"Yet might these lips, before too late, hold tender
converse once again
With her, who surely here doth reign, close to the
everlasting gate;
Somewhere among these living throngs that near
the throne of Love rejoice,
Surely she raiseth up her voice, in rapturous anthems,
saintliest songs.

"Though she abideth in the skies of unimagined
ecstacy,
Surely she will be glad to see mine outstretched arms
and aching eyes."
So spake I, and arising, laid my forehead close
against the door,
Scarce trusting to envision more the features of the
heavenly maid —

But, slipping forth from out the throng, came the
fair form of my beloved,
A flood of light beside her moved, I heard again
her bridal song;

Upon her head a crown of stars — ah, mine inexorable fate;
I threw myself against the gate and struggled with the iron bars. . . .

I wakened in the lonely lands of earth, my face was wet with tears,
And evening dew, and all my fears awoke with me, to see my hands,
Torn, and with hot blood crimson dyed; yet could my soul at last rejoice, —
Still to recall her pregnant voice, as at the Marriage of the Bride.

Through the dim gardens of the night I walk with meditating pace,
Slowly, and with absorbèd face, seeking the pathways of delight;
Banished for me the dull despair with which those perilous paths I trod,
For in my heart, the gift of God, knowledge of Life and Death, I bear.